

The Proverbs 31 Woman

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

Have you ever had to advise someone about an issue with which you have no experience? It is not easy is it? In such cases you first try to seek counsel from someone who has had experience, then your advice has more credibility. I find myself in that same situation with this lesson as I attempt to preach to women. I propose to teach you about being a wife and mother, yet, I have never been either. So, instead of giving you my advice, I have sought the counsel of one who has had experience. The woman who gave this advice is the mother of King Lemuel (Solomon), recorded in **Proverbs 31:10-31**.

As we examine her advice note three different ways in which this advice should be used. First, any woman should view this as advice for how she should conduct herself as a wife and mother. Second, Lemuel's mother was actually intending this as advice for seeking a marriage partner. So, unmarried men, if they desire to have happy marriages, should view this as advice for seeking a spouse. Finally, parents with daughters should view this as a guide for training them.

Discussion:

- I. Why would any woman want to be a virtuous wife?
 - A. The answer to this question is very simple, she has what every woman wants. She has what even the modern feminists are crying out for, begging for and competing for.
 - B. She has a husband who trusts her (**Proverbs 31:11**). Her husband does not doubt her, second-guess her or constantly question her work. He has faith and confidence in her.
 - C. She adds value to her family and community, providing for her family (**vs. 15**), for those in need (**vs. 20**) and even impacting merchants and businesses (**vs. 24**).
 - D. She has great strength (**vss. 17, 25**).
 - E. She has confidence, not fear, about the future (**vss. 21, 25**). Instead of fearing because snow may come, she rejoices over what is to come, "she smiles at the future" (NASB).
 - F. Finally, she has praise and honor from her children, who rise up and call her blessed (**vs. 28**); her husband, who does not look to other women but claims she excels all others (**vs. 28**); her community, who praises her in the gates (**vs. 31**); and her God (**vs. 30**).
- II. The virtuous wife's governing principle—she does good to her husband always (**vs. 12**).
 - A. Everything else she does is to accomplish this purpose. In the beginning, God created Eve to be a helper for Adam (**Genesis 2:18**). The virtuous wife does not hinder or harm her husband. Rather, her help is so great that according to **vs. 23**, her husband will be known in the gates and will sit among the elders in the land.
 - B. To modern feminists, the wife is not her husband's helper. She is his competitor. Her goal is to prove that anything he can do, she can do better. In contrast, the virtuous wife says, "Anything you can do, I can help you do better." Modern feminists do not want wives to act in such a way that their husbands will be "known in the gates". They want wives to usurp that position, showing that they should have that honor and praise. However, while the virtuous wife does not compete for honor in the gates, she receives it anyway (**vs. 31**). She receives praise by helping, not competing. Feminists fail where the worthy woman will win.
- III. The virtuous wife's industry—she is a willing worker (**vss. 13-14**).
 - A. This woman seeks for wool and flax, making clothing for her household. Additionally, she brings her food from afar. That is, she does not just do what is convenient for her, but what is best to provide for her household. According to **vs. 19**, she works with the spindle and the distaff, she is a weaver. According to **vss. 21-25**, she makes clothes for herself, her family and even uses her ability to provide for others and make a profit that will provide even more for her family.
 - B. What amazes me the most about this is this woman is a king's wife who has maidservants. Why should she do any work? She ought to be able to sit around and live it up while all her servants do the work. But the worthy woman does not sit around eating the bread of idleness (**vs. 27**). Instead she works, not because she is forced, but because she wants to.

- IV. The virtuous wife's role—she is a manager of the home (**vss. 15-18**).
- A. The virtuous wife demonstrates how to manage the home as commanded in **I Timothy 5:14**.
 - B. According to **vs. 15**, she rations and apportions based on needs. She does not waste based on desires. According to **vs. 16**, she considers and thinks through her dealings with the household assets. She does not behave rashly, based on emotion and feelings. Also according to **vs. 16**, when she gains profit, she reinvests it in her family and her household. She does not use it simply to increase pleasure and enjoyment.
 - C. According to **vs. 18**, she is confident that what she is doing is right and good. And based on **vss. 15 and 18**, she is so disciplined and serious about her duty as a manager and guide in the home that she rises early and stays up late.
- V. The virtuous wife's attitude—she is selfless (**vss. 19-20**).
- A. Too many today look at their own profits as only for themselves. They are greedy and selfish. But the worthy woman manages her home and the finances of her home in such a way that she may help those who are in need. Paul gave this charge to all of us in **Ephesians 4:28**. We are to work so that we will be able to give to those in need.
 - B. We see this spirit exemplified in Tabitha/Dorcas in **Acts 9:36, 39**. The worthy woman is not filled with greed and is not selfish. Rather, she spends herself in serving others.
- VI. The virtuous wife's discipline—she prepares for the future (**vs. 21-25**).
- A. Having her household clothed warmly when the snows come is given as an illustration of the author's real point. She is prepared for what may come in the future. Though major snowstorms are quite rare in Jerusalem, the virtuous wife would be prepared. Instead of thinking about what was pleasurable at the moment, she made sure preparations for the future were made first. When the snowstorms came, she would not be destitute or at the mercy of others' charity. She would be prepared and so she smiled at her future.
 - B. Far too many times we get into major problems because we did not prepare. We knew that a certain thing might happen (a medical emergency) or will happen (car breaking down), but we do not prepare for it. However, we act as though when those things occur the money will come from nowhere. In these situations, the "snowstorm" is a long way off and we do not prepare for it. We spend our money on pleasures for the moment. When the snowstorm eventually comes we act as if there was nothing that could be done and now we deserve benevolence. But the virtuous wife avoids those circumstances because she is disciplined and prepared.
- VII. The virtuous wife's speech—she controls her tongue (**vs. 26**).
- A. When the worthy woman speaks, her words are not hasty and rash. Her words are filled with wisdom—a wisdom, by the way, that even her husband recognizes. Her speech is not biting, sarcastic and cruel. Rather, it is controlled by kindness.
 - B. James explained how difficult the tongue can be and what kind of problems it can cause (**James 3:2-12**). There are many, otherwise seemingly good women, whose souls will be lost because they do not follow the example of this worthy woman and control their tongues. Words can destroy relationships. They can destroy husbands. They can destroy children. They can destroy churches. They can destroy souls—both the speaker's and the hearer's. But at the same time, words can heal and save. Do not miss how important this point is.
- VIII. The virtuous wife's focus—she watches her household, not everyone else's (**vs. 27**).
- A. This passage provides an interesting contrast about this worthy woman. Instead of being idle, she watches her household. But what does this contrast mean?
 - B. The term "watch" used in **Proverbs 31:27** is used elsewhere to refer to a watchman [**I Samuel 14:16; II Samuel 18:24; et al**]. This is similar to **Titus 2:5**. Wives are to be "homemakers" (NKJV) or "keepers at home" (KJV). The idea is, they keep watch over the home. That is, they watch to keep their household safe from harm and evil influence. This is a full-time job. It keeps a woman busy and keeps her from being idle.
 - C. The contrasting idleness of **Proverbs 31:27** is described by Paul in **I Timothy 5:13**. This idleness will lead a woman to be a gossip and a busybody. That is, because she is not looking to her own household as she ought, she is looking to everyone else's.

D. I have to admit, I have some difficulty in explaining this point. Because, on the one hand, those who are gossips and busybodies typically do not view themselves in that way. Rather, they think they are being the virtuous wife, doling out wise advice to those who need it. On the other hand, worthy and excellent women who have sage wisdom to share, typically refrain from helping others because they fear they are being busybodies. As an outside observer, I will not always be able to tell which one you are. But perhaps you can examine yourself by asking the following questions. Please, do not ask these questions about other women. Think about yourself.

1. Have you first looked at your own house? That is the whole point of **Proverbs 31:27**. The worthy woman has looked at her own household first. Often busybodies and gossips are busy trying to get the mote out of the eyes of others, while the beam is in their own.
2. Is your advice really given to help others or to demonstrate how special and wise you are?
3. Are you saddened when you hear about problems other families are facing, or do you like hearing about them so you can be in the middle of them and thus feel important?
4. When you give advice, is it backed up by the Bible or is it your own opinion?
5. Do you tell third parties about someone's problems and your advice to them? Busybodies and gossips often do this. Sometimes they justify it by saying, "I thought you should know," or "Maybe you can do something about it." Sometimes they justify it by saying, "Well, I know their problem is with you." The worthy woman keeps problems and advice confidential and if someone has a problem with someone else, she sends or takes them to that person. She does not go herself.
6. Finally, as I listed the other questions, did you disregard my direction to not ask these questions about other women but think only about yourself? If you spent more time thinking about other women, you are probably a busybody.

IX. The virtuous wife's motivation—she fears God (**vs. 30**).

- A. Why does the excellent wife do all the things presented in this chapter? Her motivation is not about her relationship with her husband, her children or her community. Rather, she acts in this way because of her relationship with God. She is so serious and devoted to her responsibilities as a worthy woman, wife and mother because she fears God. She knows that God expects some things of her and she does not want to fall short of His expectations.
- B. Regrettably few people today fill their roles and responsibilities because they fear God. Typically they act the way they feel like acting, based on what they think will give them the most pleasure. Sometimes they act the way society has prescribed, not wanting to appear different or even old-fashioned. The worthy woman does not act based on feelings, pleasures and enjoyments. She acts based on what is right, responsible and mature because she wants to please God. She is not worried about fitting in with her society or some politically correct view of her role. She is thinking about when she will stand before God in judgment. She wants to receive His praise. Of course, the amazing thing is, this worthy woman will not only receive God's praise, but as we earlier noticed, she also receives praise and honor from her husband, her children and even from her community. She receives what so many want. But she receives it because she did not make seeking the honor of men her goal. Rather, her goal was pleasing the almighty God.

Conclusion:

As we conclude, I would like to share another interesting observation. Lemuel's mother said this woman's worth is far above jewels. Why is that so? It is so because this woman is rarer than fine jewels. My prayer is that this congregation be a jewel mine.